

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1-31 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) Lighter than air aircraft characterised in that it comprises at least two balloons [(1)] connected together by connecting means forming a chassis [(2)].

2. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 1, characterised in that the [(said)] connecting means [(2)] are connected to the [(said)] balloons [(1)] through an electromagnetic type connection.

3. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 1, characterised in that the [(said)] connecting means [(2)] are connected to at least one of the [(said)] balloons [(1)] through a mechanical connection articulated about at least one axis [(22)] approximately parallel to the longitudinal axis of the [(said)] aircraft.

4. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, characterised in that the [(said)] balloon(s) [(1)] on one side of the [(said)] connecting means [(2)] are connected to the [(said)] balloon(s) [(1)] on the other side of the [(said)] connecting means [(2)] by elastic means [(11)].

5. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1, characterised in that the [(said)] chassis [(2)] includes carrying means [(24)] designed to support equipment and / or at least one person.

6. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 5, characterised in that the [(said)] carrying means [(24)] are essentially within the volume lying between the [(said)] balloons [(1)].

7. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1, characterised

in that the [[said]] balloons [(1)] and the [[said]] connecting means [(2)] together form an essentially symmetric assembly.

8. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1, characterised in that it comprises a balloon [(1)] on each side of the [[said]] connecting means [(2)].

9. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1, characterised in that it comprises two balloons [(1)] on each side of the [[said]] connecting means [(2)].

10. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 9, characterised in that the [[said]] balloons [(1)] lie in an approximately horizontal plane.

11. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 9, characterised in that the [[said]] two balloons [(1)] on the same side of the [[said]] connecting means [(2)] are placed one above the other.

12. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 11~~ claim 1, characterised in that the aircraft comprises means of propulsion and / or controlling the stability of the [[said]] aircraft.

13. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 12, characterised in that the [[said]] propulsion means comprise at least one first engine [(35)] capable of producing a thrust along the longitudinal axis of the [[said]] aircraft and located at or close to the centre of gravity of the [[said]] aircraft.

14. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 12 ~~or to claim 13~~, characterised in that it comprises pitch control means.

15. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 14, characterised in that the [[said]] pitch control means ~~preferably~~ include at least two engines (31), (32) installed approximately on the longitudinal axis of the [[said]] aircraft, one forward from the centre of gravity of the [[said]] aircraft, and the other aft from the centre of gravity of the [[said]] aircraft.

16. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 11 to 15~~ claim 11, characterised in that it comprises roll control means.

17. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 16, characterised in that the [[said]] roll control means ~~preferably~~ comprise at least two engines (33), (34) installed on each side of the longitudinal axis of the [[said]] aircraft, in an approximately horizontal plane.

18. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~claims~~ claim 16 and 17, characterised in that the [[said]] roll control means comprise roll control engines (33), (34) ~~are~~ mounted on an axis perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the [[said]] aircraft and passing through the centre of gravity of the [[said]] aircraft or close to it.

19. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 11 to 18~~ claim 1, characterised in that ~~the said~~ it comprises stability control means (31), (32), (33), (34) which can act on the altitude of the [[said]] aircraft.

20. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 11 to 19~~ claim 1, characterised in that ~~the said~~ it comprises propulsion means [[also]] which further comprise a means of displacing the [[said]] aircraft laterally.

21. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 20, characterised in that the [[said]] lateral displacement means comprise at least two lateral engines (36), (37), capable of producing thrusts in opposite directions along a horizontal axis perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the

[[said]] aircraft and passing through or close to the centre of gravity of the [[said]] aircraft.

22. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 21~~ claim 1, characterised in that it comprises directional means.

23. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 22, characterised in that the [[said]] directional means comprise at least one control surface.

24. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 23, characterised in that it comprises at least one left control surface [[(41)]] and at least one right control surface [[(42)]] mounted at the aft of the [[said]] aircraft.

25. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 24~~ claim 1, characterised in that it comprises at least one vertical stabiliser ~~(51), (52)~~.

26. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~claims 22 and~~ claim 25, characterised in that it comprises at least one control surface [[(511)]] mounted on the [[said]] vertical stabiliser.

27. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 22 to 26~~ claim 22, characterised in that the [[said]] directional means comprise at least one orientation engine installed so as to produce at least a thrust transverse to the longitudinal axis of the [[said]] aircraft.

28. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to claim 27, characterised in that the [[said]] directional means comprise at least two orientation engines ~~(38), (39)~~ mounted with respect to each other so as to produce thrusts in approximately opposite directions.

29. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 28~~ claim 1, characterised in that it comprises remote control means, with or without wire.

30. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to any ~~one of claims 1 to 29~~ claim 1, characterised in that the ~~[[said]]~~ balloons ~~[[1]]~~ are approximately cylindrical in shape.

31. (Currently Amended) Aircraft according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 30~~ claim 1, characterised in that it comprises onboard means belonging to the following group:

- picture taking means,
- communication and / or telecommunication means;
- sound pickup means;
- meteorological data acquisition means;
- radiation measurement means;
- air analysis means;
- geographic positioning means;
- means of measuring the speed of objects on the ground and / or in the air and / or at

sea.